University of Alberta

School Principals' and Secretaries' Responses to Conflict

by

Carol Lynn Steilo ©

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in
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine tactics used by school principals and secretaries in handling conflicts in which they have been involved. A review of the literature showed that most studies of conflict were conducted in the business-labor area.

This study investigated strategies that the principals of three elementary schools and the secretaries of three elementary schools used to manage conflict. The schools varied in size, and all were in an urban setting.

The participants related their chosen conflict stories. Background information and the actions of the participants, as well as those of others involved in the conflict, were taken into consideration; and a reflection on what might have been done differently resulted. The data were analyzed to surface the conflict-management strategies used by these school principals and school secretaries.

Both groups of principals and secretaries viewed conflict situations as learning experiences. Conflict outcomes were analyzed by the participants as to their positive and/or negative nature for those involved. This report should assist administrators, secretaries, and students to become familiar with useful conflict-management strategies.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Overview

Conflict and its management pervade every aspect of our lives. Conflict can be seen as a disagreement evident in an emotional interaction between individuals. Conflict management has been addressed in the business sector, but little has been written for the educational setting.

Historically in Canada, the education of children has been decentralized to local authorities. Schools have evolved from a one-room Grade 1 to 12 school, with centralized authority, to buildings that contain not only classrooms but also specialty rooms, such as computer labs. With these physical changes has come also a general move to site-based management. Running parallel to these changes, educators now must justify not only programs but also expenditures, and the move towards greater community and clientele input has increased. Added to these complex changes, the whole nature of society, and especially the family, is changing drastically.

Rapid change, be it a move towards one-parent families or a broadening of social acceptance of individual difference, has greatly increased the diversity of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff. It is this increasing diversity, coupled with decreasing financial means, that is resulting in a diversity not only of parent and student needs, but also of teaching staff and administrator needs. With the move from the authoritarian, one-room schoolhouse

to a more democratic style, many more people are involved in education, and conflict becomes more likely.

In this changing time it is important for us to understand conflict in the context of a school setting. Grassroots as well as mandated changes have greatly affected schools. The usual front line is the school office. This is where secretaries, and often principals, are confronted with student, parental, and community problems. School secretaries attempt to funnel these conflicts to the appropriate receiver or handle them personally.

In this time of change it is important to address conflict in the school system and to study how those in the front line—the secretaries and principals—address conflict.

Reflection on specific conflict stories that use school principals and secretaries as narrators may allow for testing of conflict strategies found in the literature and may also reveal new strategies not yet discussed in the literature. The study of conflict and its strategies for partial or full resolution of the situation will help school personnel to understand better how to cope with day-to-day situations that involve a conflict situation.

The remainder of this study outlines the problem and the specific research questions. The study is designed to look at principals' and secretaries' involvement in conflict stories of their choosing, to identify the conflict strategies that they used in managing the conflict, and then to compare the findings to the existing theories that have been developed to this date.

Chapter II reviews the current literature on conflict-management strategies and presents a synthesis of the information in a matrix of conflict-management strategies.

Chapter III presents the research design and includes the data-collection methods, ethical considerations, and procedure for data analyses.

Chapter IV presents the findings of this study. Examples are described, conflict-management strategies are identified and categorized, and a summary is included.

Chapter V compares the research findings to the findings from the literature, summarizes the resulting similarities and differences, and then provides some implications for further research.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to explore the concept of conflict in an educational setting. I wanted to look at school principals' and secretaries' management of conflict: How do they manage the situation? What types of conflict-management approaches might they use?

I also sought to explore what principals and secretaries have learned from the conflict situation: Did they use just one way of managing conflict, or were various approaches used until management of the conflict had been accomplished? Did they learn from the conflict encounters? Did they repeat or alter their conflict-management techniques when a similar situation arose? The insights that they provided may result in a confirmation or an addition to what has been stated in previously written literature, or it may result in new

information about conflict and the techniques used to try to resolve these human interactions.

Research Questions

Based on these concerns, the specific research questions explored were:

1. What were secretaries' and principals' experiences of conflict?
2. What conflict-management strategies did they use?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are used in this study:

Conflict: Historically, conflict meant a negative situation which drains time and energy from those involved. In this study conflict is examined as a situation with varying degrees of positivity or negativity resulting from the specific interaction. Hanson (1991) has described conflict as

> "an 'interactive state' manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or difference within or between social entities" (Rahim, 1986) such as individuals, groups, or organizations. The sources of the conflict are usually rooted in incompatible goals, cognitions (e.g., different viewpoints), or emotions (e.g., differing loyalties). (Hanson, p. 273)

Strategy: an action recalled from a previously learned repertoire. *Strategies,* when linked with *conflict,* refer to the resulting learned methods of handling or containing conflict from previous experiences. It is acknowledged that strategies can be learned not only from previous experiences but also from discussions or in presented form, such as forums or lectures on conflict-management techniques.

Avoidance: "often a form of flight that can suggest indifference, evasion, withdrawal, or isolation. Being unassertive and uncooperative can also represent a delay tactic, hoping that time and events will treat the problem" (Hanson, 1991, p. 285).

Domination: "frequently means a desire to win at the other's expense. In this context, it is a win-lose power struggle. The opinions and interests of others are of little interest" (Hanson, 1991, p. 285).

Accommodation: "can be an appeasement or submission to others at your own expense. Under some conditions, it can also represent generosity. Under others, it might mean conserving energy and resources by giving up a few battles in order to win the war" (Hanson, 1991, p. 285).

Compromise: "reflects splitting the difference or giving up something to get something. When there is not enough to go around, half a loaf is usually better than none" (Hanson, 1991, p. 286).

Collaboration: "represents a desire to integrate and fully satisfy the interests of both parties. Neither party desires to acquire the advantage over the other. Thus, it is a mutually beneficial stance based on trust and problem solving so everyone wins" (Hanson, 1991, p. 286).

Significance of the Study

The research has made the following contributions:

1. to basic knowledge about conflict management as it pertained to a school setting;

2. to educational theory, with the addition of conflict strategies to a list based on the limited literature in this field. Growth of

knowledge in this area has allowed administrators and secretaries to study their style of conflict management and other management techniques and, ultimately, to add to their repertoire; and

3. to the solution of educational problems (long-range or short-range) or to shedding more light on conflict and its management. If there are models or a series of processes that are useful in conflict management, one should be aware of these and use them appropriately in one's practice to reflect, draw from theories, and then deal with conflict.

Assumptions

The major assumption was that conflict exists in school settings and that principals and secretaries manage conflict situations. Other assumptions were that the respondents would relate their stories accurately and of their free will.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to the stories told by principals and secretaries of schools in an urban area in a western Canadian province. In order to identify conflict-management strategies, principals and secretaries were asked to describe a conflict situation of their choice. These stories were of the respondents' choosing.

Limitations

The limitations of the study might have involved insufficient or incomplete recollection of the conflict situations and the interview techniques. Inaccuracies in the recounting of stories could have led to

biased findings of the study. As well, loosely structured interviews might have affected the results because of questioning variation and the resulting responses.

The participants were informed that their participation was optional and that they had the right to decline to answer a question or to withdraw at any time. These stories were some of many stories that could have been related and should not be considered representative.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The major objective of this investigation was to identify and examine the strategies used by principals and secretaries within an educational organization to manage conflict. The authors included in this literature review are a reflection of some of the more current discussions of conflict. This sets the stage for a contrast and comparison of these authors' ideas about conflict strategies, as well as serving as a backdrop for the research, which looks at real-life conflict situations and the resulting strategies used to manage conflict.

Mintzberg (1983)

Mintzberg (1983) looked at the politicized organization as rising directly from a gradual build-up and pervasion of conflict (p. 444). He suggested that after an organization has been partially or fully captured by conflict, there are five resolutions. The conflict can be completely resolved with the organization re-establishing its original order of power, or there is a movement to a new order of power. Another resolution gives an organization a life of its own and speaks about the death of organizations. The organization can die from the conflict itself; or in the throes of death, a conflict may arise when the death is already imminent. Lastly, the conflict may be only partially resolved, thus forming a shaky alliance that can be somewhat stable on its own or supported artificially. If power rests on an artificial base, pressure for correction remains just below the surface, waiting for a new cycle (a more permanent correction).

Mintzberg (1983) then went on to discuss life cycles of conflict, or, as he called it, life cycles of the political arena, which include:

Life Cycle 1: "Flare up": This is a challenge to the established order-confrontation-resolution in favor of the challengers or the established order. Repetitions may occur if the conflict is not naturally resolved.

Life Cycle 2: "Stand off": The challenge results in a stand-off. Both sides are dependent on the organization's survival and the formation of a shaky alliance through artificial support, or there is a destruction of the organization if fighting intensifies.

Life Cycle 3: "Gradual politicization": Through multiple challenges, a slow breakdown in illegitimate power, and a lack of support, the result is an organization death.

Life Cycle 4: "Lifetime shaky alliance": This results from a need for influence bases in a new organization. This alliance remains unless the balance is lost.

Life Cycle 5: "Death throes": Because of ineffectiveness and loss of support, there is a speeding up of the death of the organization.

Deutsch (1973)

Deutsch (1973) classified conflict using perception and identified six types of conflict:

1. Vertical: These conflicts are accurately perceived.
2. Contingent: In these conflicts an obvious solution is not perceived.
3. Displaced: These are conflicts that focus on the wrong issues.

4. Misattributed: These conflicts are focused on the wrong person.
5. False: These conflicts are completely misperceived.
6. Latent: This type of conflict is not perceived at all.

Deutsch (1973) also listed five major causes of conflict:

1. control—resources
2. preferences, nuisances
3. nature of parties' relationships
4. value differences
5. belief differences

Luthans (1973)

Luthans (1973) elaborated with a set of assumptions about conflict and conflict management:

1. Conflict is inevitable.
2. Causes of conflict can be found only in the total situation.
3. Conflict is a vital element in change.
4. Conflict may be good for the organization. (p. 473)

Luthans (1973, p. 473) spoke of Litterer's (1971) three basic strategies to reduce conflict. Firstly, buffers can be erected between conflicting parties, and the conflict can be reduced. The second deals with sensitivity training. This helps the parties involved to develop better insights into themselves and how they affect others. The third strategy is to redesign the organizational structure in order for the conflict to de-escalate. This includes containment but still obtains the objectives of the organization.

Luthans (1973) looked at conflict as a lead to innovation and change: an energizer for some, a protector (as in divide and conquer), and an important element in analyzing what makes an organization tick. As Luthans saw it, conflict could work for and against goal attainment.

Luthans and Kreitner (1975)

Luthans and Kreitner (1975) distinguished between positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement as general conflict-management strategies. A positive reinforcer is a consequence which, when presented, strengthens a behavior. Positive reinforcement is the overall process. If the response is increased productivity, then it is a positive reinforcer. This positive reinforcement must be viewed as positive not just by the manager, but by the worker as well (perception). Luthans and Kreitner (1975) also mentioned inducing willingness to serve. They stated that there is no single reinforcer that will effectively control all behavior in a single person or control a single behavior in all people.

The effect of a negative reinforcer is a reduction or a weakening of a behavior. The negative control (punishment) is a functionally defined process. If the consequence does not have this effect, negative control has not occurred.

Wenrich (1970; cited in Luthans & Kreitner, 1975) has looked at four operations identified when comparing reinforcement and punishment:

1. If a positive reinforcer is presented after a response, the result is positive reinforcement.

2. If a positive reinforcer is withdrawn following a response, the result is punishment.

3. If a negative reinforcer is presented following a response, the result is punishment.

4. If a negative reinforcer is withdrawn following a response, the result is negative reinforcement.

Luthans and Kreitner (1975) went on to say that consequences are not punishing because the manager feels that they are. Punishers can be identified in the same way that reinforcers are identified. The authors also concluded that negative reinforcement is very ineffective in modifying behavior.

Likert and Likert (1976)

Likert and Likert (1976) looked at conflict in two different ways. Substantive conflict was rooted in the task substance and came from job-related frustration. These conflicts would include disagreement over personal needs, resources, role definition, practices, and policies. Affective conflict deals with individual emotions when involved in an interpersonal relationship.

Likert and Likert (1976) also discussed the win-lose in conflict resolution. Even though win-lose is the most natural way of looking at conflict, they felt that it is not the most effective treatment.

Loewen (1983)

Loewen (1983) looked at conflict strategies used by school superintendents in Saskatchewan. The first strategy discussed was information control. This could take the form of presenting too much information, withholding information, specially preparing explained information, or channeling selective information. The latter strategy could involve information to specific people or through specific people. Information distortion was used to strengthen or close conflict cases.

The formation of coalitions was another strategy. Seeking an ally or allies—strength in numbers—was the conflict defense used (coalition formation). Also used was coalition destruction, the breaking down of support or connections.

Policies, rules, regulations, or laws were set down by a governing board and were relied on to refer to and solve some conflict situations.

Buying time (stalling) was used to help clear or take advantage of ambiguities.

Control of the conflict setting (environment) was also a strategy that was used. Seating, agenda items, and time were used for control or for an advantage.

Rewards were used as well as withdrawing from a conflict in order to let the two parties involved settle their own conflict. Denigration of opponents, proclaimed naiveté of a situation, and withdrawal strategies were other conflict tactics used.

Loewen (1983) found that strategies were not exclusive but were used together or in an ordered fashion, and each individual's style varied.

Kirkwood (1990)

Kirkwood (1990) looked at conflict as inevitable. Guidelines for principals—such as acceptance of genuine differences in values, needs, and goals between individuals and groups—are an important component of conflict resolution. Thus conflict is seen as a way to raise problems and seek solutions. The most important tactics used by principals were interpersonal communication skills. Talking, listening, planning, neutrality, and encouragement of two-way communication are inherent in good interpersonal communication skills of a principal.

Owens (1991)

Owens (1991) saw conflict as an inevitable aspect of human social systems. Conflict serves a useful function by stimulating creative solutions to problems. Organizational conflict is either destructive or constructive, depending on how it is managed. He proposed a way of diagnosing conflict in a situation and then, from this analysis, of choosing a useful management strategy. The approach to be chosen should be the one to minimize the destructive aspects and to allow for growth and development.

Owens (1991) mentioned three basic strategies for dealing with conflict: collaboration, bargaining, and power. Bargaining serves as a bridge between power and collaboration strategies and allows for a time factor. This time factor involves a move from a win-lose power struggle to a win-win problem-solving collaboration.

Hanson (1991)

Hanson (1991) looked at two schools of thought on conflict and its management in the education field. Traditionally, the administrator's role deals with intense conflict, leading to stress and exhaustion. The first school of thought says that administrators are on top of conflict situations, enjoy dealing with conflict, and may even derive benefits from it. The objective is management with balance. Conflict leads to creativity in problem solving, improved personal relations, and, ultimately, higher productivity.

The first conflict-management model that Hanson (1991) looked at is on a continuum, with flight at one end and fight at the other. As situations change, strategies may change. Strategies chosen can be affected by time, emergency conditions, emotional and ego involvements, invested resources, external links, frequency of choices, and collective work with others.

The second model that Hanson (1991) examined is Kenneth Thomas' work (p. 286). This theory looks at the degree to which a manager desires to satisfy himself or satisfy others. There are five conflict-management techniques discussed. The first strategy is avoidance, a withdrawal or delay tactic. The second is domination, a win-lose power struggle. The third is accommodation, which is submission and which may or may not have other motives. The fourth is compromise, which suggests giving up something to get something. And the last is collaboration, which implies a mutually beneficial situation based on trust and problem solving.

Barth (1990)

Barth (1990) looked at conflict and how those involved see their roles. He gave further insight into maintaining a professional standard and relinquishing some decision making. The teachers in Barth's school were leaders, and the principal must realize that the resolution of a conflict must be dealt with by an empowered teacher. Bureaucratic control could destroy the trust relationship. Empowerment or allowing for teacher influence as a conflict manager was Barth's key point.

Maurer (1991)

Maurer (1991) has written a text for school administrators on how to deal with conflict. First, one identifies the source and type of conflict and then overcomes the four biases of overconfidence, negative perception, risk perception, and personality. He identified two types of power relevant to conflict: the power to make decisions and the power to persuade. Decision making results from the use of past experience, intuition, and gathering of some but perhaps not all of the information. Then, using feedback, decisions are made in a time frame. The choice between the five persuasion models developed by Maurer depend on time, objectives, personnel involvement, cost, and personal needs. The first persuasion model is that of the sanction. It uses rewards and punishments for change. The second model is directive, where the administrator directs a person to change. The third is compromise, where a trade-off occurs. Expert advice is the fourth model. Here the knowledge base comes from experience. The

last is the developer model, where the administrator influences and helps all involved to gain by blending ideas.

Maurer (1991) believed that about one half of all negotiations use the last model. Creating a positive climate, meeting and agenda preparation, and awareness of hidden agendas are part of the preparatory management process.

Fris (1991)

In his article Fris (1991) identified 13 conflict-management strategies that he has found through research:

1. Management of information, which deals with improving the flow of information. This includes the gathering, distribution, analysis, control, and finally, if necessary, massaging or reporting the message in softer tones.

2. Management of coalitions, which basically brings people on board with you. Power plays may or may not be involved with this strategy.

3. Appealing/adhering to norms.

4. Rewards/punishments.

5. Maintaining order.

6. Backing off. This includes capitulation and distancing oneself (or avoidance).

7. Force. The use of assertion or coercive techniques are implied.

8. Personal attack. This deals with a perceived attack on oneself, real or imaginary. The implication that self-concept is de-valued is attached to this strategy.

9. Dealing with affect. One is provided with opportunities to save face.

10. protecting personal interests. Protecting one's turf, job or special interests is implied;

11. controlling the environment. This includes getting rid of the other person because teamwork is important;

12. establishing rapport and mollifying or mending fences. This is a climate manager; and

13. managing or buying time. This is noted as a well-used technique.

Sergiovanni (1991)

Sergiovanni (1991) described the work of a principal as making sense of messy situations by increasing understanding and discovering and communicating meaning to others. His beliefs are to empower and enable staff members in an organization. He felt that the word *administration* contains *minister* and that that aspect of ministering should pervade a leader's role in the school. He went on to say that conflicts are not easily resolved and that a set of easy answers does not exist. Thus, moral and ethical implications for educational leaders when dealing with conflict are the keynote of his book.

Miskiw (1994)

Miskiw (1994) addressed conflict-management theories on a historical timeline. Three perspectives emerged for Miskiw. The first was the traditional approach (late 1800s to mid 1940s), which gives conflict a harmful, negative, and destructive connotation.

Management was delegated the task of eliminating or preventing conflict.

The behavioral approach (late 1940s to mid 1970s) sees conflict as a potentially positive force that was natural and inevitable. Managerial and organizational theory during this time were flavored by this view.

The latest view on conflict Miskiw (1994) labeled as interactionist. It states that conflict is a stimulator and promotes changes. New ideas, cohesive group dynamics, and improved decision making through input of varying ideas allow for a release of ideas. The conflicts that foster organizational goals are considered to be functional for the organization, and those that do not are considered dysfunctional. Here the manager lets conflict runs its course, ensuring that it remains on a healthy course.

Miskiw (1994) then reviewed 45 techniques for handling conflict, which were discussed by taking a sampling of texts on conflict-management strategies. The purpose was to apply this knowledge to help to understand conflict-management strategies in an educational organization.

Synthesis

The application of the aforementioned authors and their ideas to a growing compilation of conflict-management strategies has resulted in Table 1, which attempts to draw out those conflict strategies that were discussed most frequently by the authors earlier in this chapter. The purpose of this review was to set the stage for examining the

Table 1

Synthesis of Conflict-Management Strategies

Strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	f
1. Collaboration - together	✓	✓					✓								3
2. Bargaining + trade-off	✓							✓							2
3. Power - force	✓	✓			✓	✓									4
4. Avoidance		✓							✓						2
5. Accommodation		✓													1
6. Compromise		✓		✓											2
7. Empowerment - developer			✓	✓									✓		3
8. Sanction - rewards/punishment				✓	✓				✓		✓				4
9. Directive				✓											1
10. Expert advice				✓											1
11. Management of information					✓				✓						2
12. Management of coalitions					✓				✓						2
13. Appealing, adhering to norms					✓				✓						2
14. Maintaining order					✓										1
15. Backing off					✓										1
16. Personal attack					✓	✓			✓						3
17. Affect					✓										1

(table continues)

Strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	f
18. Protecting personal interests					✓										1
19. Controlling environment					✓				✓						2
20. Mollifying, mending					✓										1
21. Managing, buying time; preparation					✓				✓						2
22. Movement to a new order						✓		✓							2
23. Death of power (change)						✓									1
24. Partial resolution - shaky alliance - to keep going at all costs						✓		✓							2
25. Partial resolution - shaky alliance - leading to death						✓									1
26. Sensitivity training								✓			✓				2

1 = Owens
2 = Hanson
3 = Barth
4 = Maurer
5 = Fris
6 = Mintzberg
7 = Kirkwood
8 = Luthans (Litterer)
9 = Loewen
10 = Likert and Likert
11 = Deutsch
12 = Luthans and Kreitner
13 = Sergiovanni
14 = Miskiw
f = frequency

extent to which the strategies used by principals and secretaries in an educational setting fit or did not fit with those in the literature.

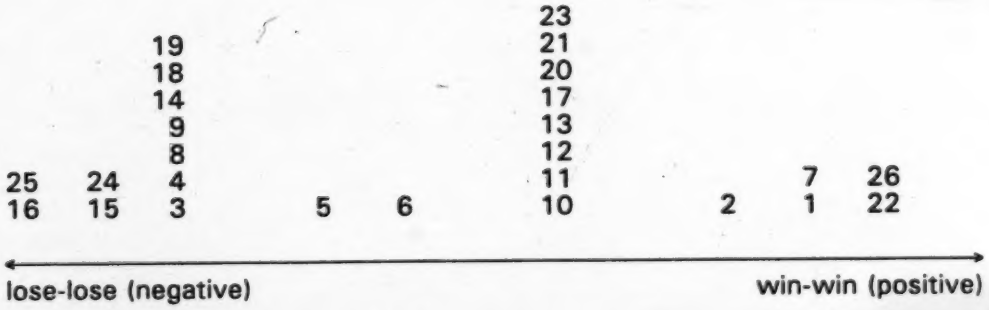
From Fris' (1991) findings, there seems to be a consensus that conflict can be managed. Depending on the strategy or strategies chosen, the result may be constructive or destructive, and in varying degrees. Some of the strategies discussed were not addressed in the conflict-management techniques. Fris' 13 strategies offer a fuller range of reactions and conflict-management techniques (Table 2). Hanson (1991) saw conflict management as a continuum with a manager's desire to satisfy himself or others. Perhaps Fris' 13 strategies could be placed on this continuum to give it a more comprehensive perspective. Barth (1990) saw resolution of conflict as depending on teachers being empowered and did not see bureaucratic administrative control as something that would nurture a trust relationship. This is an interesting framework to add to a conflict-management table (Table 1).

Maurer (1991) went further than most when he identified the sources of conflict. Maurer saw conflict more as power, the power to make decisions or the power to persuade. His first three persuasion models, sanction, directive, and compromise, appear to fit into Fris' (1991) 13 conflict-management strategies. The fourth model, expert advice, is perhaps a fourteenth strategy for Fris. Maurer's fifth model is a collaborative approach and appears to be more in line with Barth's (1990) ideas about conflict management as well as Fris' coalition strategy. Preparation for conflict is a key in Maurer's ideas. This too could be a key concept to be added to Fris' model.

Table 2

Continuum of Strategies and Perceived Effects on Their Outcomes

1. Collaboration
2. Bargaining
3. Power - force
4. Avoidance
5. Accommodation
6. Compromise
7. Empowerment - developer
8. Sanction - rewards/punishment
9. Directive
10. Expert advice
11. Management of information
12. Management of coalitions
13. Appealing, adhering to norms
14. Maintaining order
15. Backing off
16. Personal attack
17. Affect
18. Protecting personal interests
19. Controlling environment
20. Mollifying, mending
21. Managing, buying time, preparation
22. Movement to a new order
23. Death of power (change)
24. Partial resolution - shaky alliance - to keep going at all costs
25. Partial resolution - shaky alliance - leading to death
26. Sensitivity training



Note. For ease and clarification, strategies were assigned numbers and placed on the continuum. A larger, more comprehensive chart could be developed.

It is recognized here that principals and secretaries in varying time frames may choose from one or many of these strategies to manage a problem. For example, some strategies imply an authoritarian stance; some imply fence sitting or reflecting back on what is required or has been done before. The other end of the continuum implies more freedom in the problem solution. A more positive outcome is implied, as well as a more negative outcome (Luthans & Kreitner, 1975).

Overall, Fris' (1991) model seems to cover Owens' (1991) basic ideas. Hanson (1991) added to conflict management with the idea of balance and a conflict continuum. He also looked at how strategies can be implemented. Barth (1990) tended to stress the empowerment aspect of teachers to deal with conflict. Maurer (1991) looked at conflict from a decision-making point of view. The addition of empowerment (Barth), expert advice (Maurer), and leaving the responsibility where it belongs (Fris, 1994) could result in more conflict strategies to consider (Table 1). As well, a continuum would also be useful to develop when reflecting on all strategies from this literature review and placing them somewhere on a win-lose line. This continuum was developed with researcher bias as to placement on the continuum (Table 2).

Mintzberg's (1983) five resolutions to conflict can be applied at the organization level or the individual level. His first resolution of re-establishing original power fits in Table 1, power - force. The second idea of a new order of power emerging stands by itself and is added at the bottom of Table 1. The second idea speaks about death as the conflict resolution. This too can be added to Table 1. The shaky-alliance thought could also be added to Table 1, which would imply a partial resolution. This would acknowledge that underneath the structure there may be pressure for a more permanent correction to be made.

Mintzberg's (1983) "flare up" would fit in under personal attack. His "stand off" idea re-emphasizes his shaky-alliance theory. This shaky-alliance theory could be split into two, depending on the end results. For the purposes of this research, the writer chose to split

them (keep going at all costs and leading to death). Mintzberg's "gradual politicization" just reconfirms the death resolution in Table 1, as do his "lifetime shaky alliance" and "death throes," *death* meaning a complete severing of ties with no pretence as to support or use for the organization or challenger.

Kirkwood's (1990) ideas about acceptance of differences in values, needs, and goals between individuals and groups would fit into collaboration in Table 1, with the use of interpersonal communication skills as an important tool.

Luthans' (1973) ideas about conflict being good, inevitable, and vital in change would fit into Table 1's "movement to a new order of power." Also, Luthans' discussion of Litterer's (1971; cited in Luthans) ideas of the buffers would fit into bargaining in Table 1. Litterer's second idea of sensitivity training merits a conflict strategy of its own. Litterer's third strategy appears to fall into the partial-resolution strategy, where the consensus is to keep going at any cost.

Loewen's (1983) ideas on conflict-management strategies fit into Table 1 very well. Management of information, be it too much, withholding, specifically prepared, or selectively channeled, can be placed under one heading. Formation and management of coalitions constructively or destructively are noted in Table 1. Policies, rules, or regulations would be included in the appealing/adhering to norms. Buying time, controlling the environment, rewards, avoidance, personal attack, and protecting personal interests (professed naiveté of a situation) are all strategies that Loewen found were used by Saskatchewan school superintendents and that fit into Table 1.

Likert and Likert's (1976) contribution to this paper raises awareness of the fact that conflict can be rooted in personal needs and emotions.

Deutsch (1973) introduced a new concept of conflict perception or how one perceives a situation. Perception of a situation as a conflict or a nonconflict by those involved was introduced in Deutsch's writings. His five major causes of conflict fit into Table 1. Recognition of value and belief differences, the nature of the parties' relationships, preferences, and nuisances might fit into the new category labeled *Sensitivity training.* Resource control appears to fit into sanctions—rewards or punishments.

Luthans and Kreitner's (1975) ideas of positive and negative reinforcement as conflict-management strategies supported Table 2. Also, their discussion of Wenrich's (1970; cited in Luthans & Kreitner) findings led to conclusions about the perception of consequences: Consequences are punishment only if perceived that way, and punishers and reinforcers can be identified in the same way.

Sergiovanni's (1991) ideas of empowerment-developer fit into this table. His ideas of moral and ethical treatment in leadership and conflict management need to be noted here.

Miskiw's (1994) 14 conflict-management strategies meld into Table 1, with the following noted exceptions: Miskiw's *effective communication and strategic avoidance/time* appears to fit into *managing, buying time; preparation* in Table 1. As well, Miskiw's *domination—use of force; power, formal authority, and control of rewards* appears to fit into *power-force* in Table 1. It is unclear as to

Miskiw's definition of competition and confrontation, so these have not been used as data in these writings.

The perception of one's state, be it conflict or not, correct or wrong, is the key to any conflict situation. Conflict is a daily occurrence and is usually dealt with swiftly. Perhaps the understanding and use of ideas on change, partial resolution, sensitivity, and even an energy-flow awareness can influence us to think of conflict as a dynamic, ever-changing, positive or negative force and to use these ideas to deal with human conflict in a humane, positive way.

CHAPTER III

THE METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was undertaken to discover and relate conflict-management techniques used by principals and secretaries in the education field. The area of research deals with strategies used in the management of conflict by urban principals and secretaries and the relationship to conflict-management techniques from the literature. The following chapter discusses the details of the methods used in conducting this study.

Research Design

This study was based on a qualitative descriptive design which was to be used for theory development and a search for understanding from the conflict incidents experienced by principals and secretaries. After the narratives of conflict situations were gathered, the incidents were examined for conflict strategies that were identified by the participants. These were then categorized and referenced to the list from the literature. The incidents were explored, with the writer analyzing and applying conflict strategies that were not mentioned by the principal or secretary.

Areas of research design, samples, data collection, data analysis, and research significance, as well as potential difficulties and possible research weaknesses, will be discussed.

Research Method

Type of Study

The method of the study was qualitative in nature. It is a descriptive study based on the gathering of interviews from principals and secretaries. Strategies used by principals and secretaries for conflict management were gathered and analyzed for categories from the literature review. The critical incident technique (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 517) acknowledges that information can result from situations described by participants.

This research was carried out in a natural setting with the interview as the main instrument. Six respondents (three principals, three secretaries) were asked to relate a conflict situation. The selection of the situation, setting, and time frame (about one-half hour in length) was made by the respondent. The use of a qualitative method allowed for multiple conflict-management strategies to emerge. The participants were free to add to the information at hand through reflective insight.

Although the purpose of this research was to develop a body of knowledge unique to the context under study, I acknowledge that the research elements constantly influenced each other, so that causes and effects were hard to distinguish.

Target Population, Accessible Population, and Sample

The target population was principals and secretaries in one urban jurisdiction of Northern Alberta. The sample was drawn from the accessible population of principals and secretaries in this jurisdiction.

Nonrandom sampling was used for selection of the six respondents. The sample contained three volunteer principal respondents and three volunteer secretarial respondents, all from different schools.

Explanation of the Research to the Participants

The participants were contacted by telephone and were given information about the purpose and procedures of the research. This included the intent of the study, the format for gathering data, the benefits arising from the research to themselves as well as to others, and the guarantees of confidentiality, anonymity, and respondent conflict-story selection.

Information about participant expectations and time commitments involved were laid out clearly to all participants from the initial contact by telephone.

At the beginning of each interview, a reaffirmation of anonymity and confidentiality was given. Throughout the entire interview and the resulting process, there was the opportunity to ask questions, to obtain clarification about any part of the study, and to remove oneself from the research project.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that all aspects of confidentiality, including people, places, and situations, would be confidential. As well, all materials pertinent to the interview would be reviewed by them, and every attempt would be made to remove any data that could identify specific

persons or situations. This was restated at each interview before the interview began. The participants were assured that the information shared about people and situations would be kept confidential at all times. They had a chance to examine their transcripts and to restate or clarify their ideas. As well, at this time the interviewee could ask for clarification or restate a questionable answer or phrase.

The participants were reminded that they were not compelled to respond to specific questions, that their participation was voluntary, that they could opt out at any time, and that shared information would be only that which they chose to discuss.

Pilot Study

A pilot study (one principal) was undertaken to provide experience in interviewing, to extend my questioning skills so that my interview questions were appropriate and useful, and to practice transcribing and analysis to prepare for this study.

Information from the pilot study as well as feedback from the participants resulted in a few minor revisions. Analysis of the pilot-interview data also showed a need for more probing questions. The process of analyzing the data using an open coding approach provided a flexible process and was later used in the actual study.

Data Collection

Qualitative data-gathering procedures were used. The primary data-gathering tool was a semistructured interview.

The principals' and secretaries' conflict situations were personal experiences and were related in places and times of their choosing.

Through a loosely structured, continuous interview, probing and clarification of information took place (Appendix A). Each participant had been previously requested to think of a school-based conflict story. The interviews chronicled principals' and secretaries' analyses of the situation (reflections). For increased accuracy in analysis, the interview sessions were tape recorded. A follow-up transcript was presented to the participants to allow for clarification by them as well as by me.

During the interview each participant was asked to describe his/her conflict-management story, to analyse it, to reflect on it, to provide background information if possible, and to reflect on the positive or negative outcomes.

The interviews were taped and transcribed. Names and places were deleted to protect the innocent. The transcripts were presented to the participants so that they could confirm or expand on their own conflict situation and its analysis.

The interviews ranged between 25 and 30 minutes in length. Each interview had set questions but a semistructured format for those who might have felt threatened by this process.

Rapport was established prior to the interview in telephone calls and a chatting session before the interview started. All participants seemed to view the interview as helpful not only to themselves, but also to others.

Data Analysis

Inductive data analysis was used to reveal unexpected outcomes. Information was gathered, understandings developed, and generalizations made. The utilization of intuitive insights by the respondents and by me was legitimized in this process.

The process of extracting and synthesizing conflict-management strategies from the literature and the principals' and secretaries' conflict situations enhanced validity. Triangulation was achieved by collecting the same data from different principals and secretaries at different times and in different places, which enhanced the construct validity by decreasing the mono-operational and mono-method biases. I collected collaborating evidence from different sources, synthesizing it and comparing it.

Recording and interpretation of events and language were subjective. Transcripts were typed and presented to the respondents for verification. Also, colleagues reviewed the data to observe whether they arrived at the same conclusions.

The frequency of used strategies was examined in the synthesized literature and in the principals' and secretaries' conflict-management strategies (emergent strategies) table.

Reliability was addressed with the use of the same interview questions, process guide, and similar situations for all respondents. Reliability was enhanced by carefully describing the procedures and techniques used so that others can follow the procedures identically (replication).

Validity was addressed with the use of typed transcripts, my notes and procedures, audit trail by colleagues, and input from

supervisors. Internal validity was addressed with the use of a single researcher and interview guide over a short time frame (one month).

Validity concerning the reliability of the measure, with the use of the same interviewer for a one-half-hour time frame in a respondent-selected time and setting, was met. To improve reliability as well as to allow further and more complete analysis, a respondent-approved tape recording of the session was done.

Trustworthiness

Credibility

Information or data obtained in this study are credible because of the verification by the participants of their transcripts. The participants recalled conflict incidents that had happened in the past, possibly resulting in discrepancies as to the actual occurrence and the remembered event.

Although not a prolonged time was spent with each participant, I was able to develop a sense of the reliability of the content provided. The choice of interview sites, times, and further discussion once the interview ended helped me to perceive that the information as the respondents saw it was correctly relayed.

Time was spent explaining the research to the participants by telephone and then before each interview. Relationships with the respondents were established during the initial contacts as well as prior to and after each interview.

Multiple interviews and content analysis achieved triangulation.

Meetings with my advisor and other students in this field served as audit checks on the data supplied. Audiotapes made rechecking for

accuracy possible. Prior practice in the form of a pilot study helped to hone interview techniques. A reflective journal was kept for each interview for reference if necessary. As well, a final contribution to accurate data collection was the consistency present in that all the interviews were conducted only by me.

There was a deliberate attempt to have a wide variety of research participants and to avoid personal biases during the interpretation. An awareness of my subjectivity and an ongoing evaluation of my data-collection procedures aided in reaching this goal.

The data were categorized with reference to the original research questions. The use of a reflective journal with notes, questions, and recommendations for the future helped to provide additional information and informative findings. The frequency of a review of the data from the interviews also helped to establish dependability.

The findings corresponded to and were in addition to those in the literature, which indicated that the collected data were appropriate for analysis.

Reflection by the participants not only helped with the research analysis, but also allowed for closure for some of the conflicts.

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality was a very significant concern in this research project. The participants volunteered and were free to opt out of the research at any time. Any information that might have revealed the identity of the participants was disguised or deleted in the audiotape-transcription stage of the proceedings. This resulted in findings that guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. Interviews were conducted

to ensure confidentiality as well as following the guidelines outlined by the Ethics Review Committee at the University of Alberta.

Summary

The naturalistic inquiry method was chosen to study conflict strategies used by principals and secretaries in an educational setting. The use of the critical incident technique to foster the description of actual events contributed to further insight in this research. Common strategies in principals' and secretaries' conflict-management techniques emerged. This was developed by comparing the different language used to describe the conflict situations. Patterns emerged based on the information collected.

Chapter IV contains the results of the research which indicate the strategies used by principals and secretaries to manage conflict.

CHAPTER IV

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

In this chapter the data are examined in respect to the central problem of the study, which was the identification and examination of conflict strategies used by principals and secretaries in a school setting.

Respondent were asked to describe conflicts in which they had been active participants. Emphasis was given to those actions which led to management of the conflict in the stories. The strategies were noted and are discussed in this chapter.

Six interviews with three principals and three secretaries were conducted and analyzed. It is important to note that some participants used more tactics and are therefore quoted more frequently.

Participant #1 (Principal)

Scenario: "Frustration"

The school conflict story was based on a principal's perception of a conflict which arose out of a situation with a teacher and a student involved in an extracurricular activity (floor hockey) during the noon hour.

Each teacher on staff was assigned an hour per week of extracurricular student activity. This particular teacher was also heavily involved in other activities outside the school setting.

Both teacher and student came into the principal's office very upset, each demonstrating what the principal designated as *extreme frustration.* This term implied losing the ability to cope with a situation

calmly, quietly, and rationally. The following excerpt was related by Participant #1 (Principal).

> The incident began shortly after the afternoon assembly bell had rung. Student Z, a Year Three student of Asian immigrants, tromps into the office. His fists are tight, his eyes squinted, and his lips pursed. His breathing is erratic. Evidence of perspiration is on the child's brow. His face is red. Grudgingly, he falls into a chair located in the front office. When I ask the child why he has been sent to the office, he glares and refuses to speak. He breaks the silence by kicking the wall.
>
> I bend down to eye level. In a calm, quiet voice, I attempt to dialogue with student Z. "I guess you're really angry right now, am I right?" This was met with silence.
>
> "What I feel may be best right now for us is for you to come into my office where you can calm down and think about the choices you have made. Do you remember that code word you and I have when you experience difficulty coping with anger? We agreed to call it *frustration.* I hunch you're feeling some of that, that frustration. Am I right?"
>
> Again silence and a cold stare, his arms firmly folded across his chest, the kicking continuing, but at a slower pace.
>
> I proceed: "Your silence shows me that you're listening and thinking about what I'm saying. I appreciate that." I take deep breaths to remain calm.
>
> Abruptly, the child stands up and shoves past me. He throws himself into a chair in my office. Two minutes pass.
>
> Teacher A tromps into the office in search of the student. Her fists are tight, her eyes squinted, and lips are pursed. Her breathing is rapid, the facial features a bright pink. She pushes past me and storms into the office, where the student is seated. I take another deep breath.
>
> In a loud voice, Teacher A exasperates: "I'm sick and tired of you being a poor sport. I don't know what happened during intramurals at floor hockey, but I won't have you come into our classroom with *that* attitude. Life's tough. You're not always going to get to be a winner. And losers who are good sports still are winners. Yesterday you and Clarence had a fight after recess. On Monday it was you and Hortense. Last week, let me count, there were at least five incidents. I'm sick and tired of this. *Do you understand?*" (Repeats this twice.) She couples this with two slaps on the desk.
>
> I squirm in my chair.
>
> The teacher is about to start again when the child raises his head and quietly utters, "Ms. _____, Teacher A was frustrated. What are you going to do about it?"
>
> The teacher steps back. I sit silently in anticipation. She leaves the office.

Strategies

Nine conflict-management strategies emerged from the data supplied by this principal, many of which were ongoing and intertwined with each other. A demonstration of power as well as a directive towards the teacher was an underlying message throughout the use of the other strategies in order to bring about change.

The student was led into the office and directed to calm down and to think about the choices that he had made. The principal bought time in not directly confronting the teacher but choosing instead to reflect on a necessary course of action. In the latter part of the interview it was found that a coalition was formed between the principal and the student, and a letter was composed and presented to the teacher which pointed out her negative modeling. A partial resolution was reached with a quest for a movement to a new order or a change in the teacher's recognition of modeling or "walking the talk."

Three new strategies emerged. The first was the recognition of the event as it was happening or just after it had happened. The term *frustration* as a name for this strategy implied an acknowledgement that a behavior was under way or had been completed but had not been managed or controlled. The principal's use of the term broke the conflict cycle before it went any further. There was a recognition of the event and of the need for its control. This implied at this teachable moment that there was an opportunity for learning and transferring, not only for the student, but also for the teacher; but the principal recognized the sharing of the blame in an overworked teacher who had been misread and asked to contribute her time to too many activities.

This scenario also makes reference to using physical reminders to remain calm, as well as showing support to manage conflict. Deep breaths, back patting, hugging, and "catching people being good" were discussed.

The third management technique which emerged from this conflict was the concept of modeling. The idea of "walking the talk," of modeling how conflict should be managed, emerged. Setting or giving examples was used here. The principal tried to model good conflict-management behaviors; as well, he chose to discuss at a future staff meeting a good example of role modeling from the literature.

The conflict-management strategies used in this scenario were (a) power-force; (b) directive; (c) managing, buying time; (d) partial resolution; (e) movement to a new order; (f) management of coalitions; (g) recognition of the event (frustration); (h) physical; and (i) modeling. These have been noted on an emergent strategies table, which is discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Participant #2 (Principal)

Scenario: "To Move or Not to Move, That Is the Question"

This scenario involved a principal of a school and the parents of a child who was dependent handicapped and chronologically older than the group with whom he was educated. The following excerpt of Participant #2 (Principal) details the story:

> What it had to do with was a situation where we had a little boy who had very high needs. Within the district he was identified as dependent handicapped. He had about a three-word vocabulary but could vocalize, and that was one of the problems that did lead to the conflict a little bit in that

he could vocalize; and when he would, quite often it would be quite loud, quite abrupt, and quite startling within the group of students. He was mobile in that he certainly could walk around; he was not in a wheelchair, but he had a very unsteady gait and basically needed one-to-one assistance at all times, even during recess and so on. And, again, that was one of the factors that eventually led to the conflict.

When he was in the school, he was in the school in kindergarten for two years, so he was one year chronologically older than the group he was with. In the school there was only one classroom grouping of students per year in school, or grade level, or however you want to describe it; so, in other words, one Grade 4 class, one Grade 5 or Year 5 class, one 6. The group that he was with, initially when he was younger he did form some friendships, but as they got older and their skills and maturity advanced and his certainly did not, the gulf was there. We relied on the students a great deal, especially to assist us in helping with the little boy at recesses and so on. There was always a full-time aide in the room with him. The program always had to be modified—*his* program had to be modified—to accommodate him. The impression I was getting from some of the parents of the typical students, if we can call the rest of the students typical, was that they were feeling some sense of frustration with the interruptions in the class, the verbal interruptions, some of the accommodations that had to be made in some of the learning, and various things like that, and so that there was a certain level of frustration.

When he was in Year 3 and he was about to move to the next year, during that spring one of the things I said to the parents was that I felt that I would like to see this boy moved from a Year 3 or a Grade 3 grouping to a Grade 5, and my reasoning was twofold: One was that that was his age peers, because he had spent two years in kindergarten, or a bit of a rationale, and I did share with them the difficulties that we were finding with that particular group that he had now been with four years. It was getting more difficult to find students who would volunteer to sort of interact with him, and that came back to one of the primary reasons for the parents' wanting him in the community school. This was a community school, so it went from there. I discussed it with the parents a number of times, and I guess in the end after about three meetings with all of the teachers involved and the parents, the parents basically said to me, "Mr./Mrs. _____, what do you really want to do?" and I said, "I really want to move him to Year 5," and they said, "Okay, fine." And it was interesting, because I felt we were still sort of negotiating back and forth, and their question to me at that point was—I remember it distinctly—"Fine. What is the appeal process for my decision?" And I said, "Well, it's not that it's a hundred percent decision, but I really think, as the principal of the whole school and all of the children in the school, one of whom is your son, that it is best." And it

was sort of interesting, because their question about the appeal process basically, I guess, solidified it at that point, and I said, "Yes, I think, in good conscience, in taking a look at all of the factors, that, yes, that is my decision." And so we agreed there and then that that was my decision, but they wanted to know what the appeal process was. I continued to maintain contact with them. The relationship remained cordial. Certainly I would not, for a while there, characterize it as friendly, and previously it was. And interestingly enough, subsequently it was. But in that intervening period it became professional.

Sort of a real difference, a noticeable difference, but difficult to explain. We certainly exchanged good mornings and so on and so forth, but shorter and various things like that. In the end what I said to them is, "Look, this is my decision. The appeal process may reverse it, or it may confirm it." I said, "Whichever way it goes, I'm going to live with it, and we're going to do our best to make sure that it works." So then we took it to the appeal, which, within our district, is to a higher level. My boss talked to me; we had some other people in from Program Planning to talk about what impact it was having on the groups and so on. The parents came in with an advocate, which was interesting; they had not really given any notice that they were going to be coming in with an advocate. That meeting stuck to facts. People addressed each other basically by last name; the parents kept referring to me as Mr./Mrs. _____, and they had had this boy in our school actually by this time about eight years, because we had a special-needs program that he was in for three years prior to starting two years of kindergarten, and then up to Year 3, so they were referring to me as Mr./Mrs. _____, as did their advocate and so on, and that one was a real—you know, "This is our side; this is my side." In the end, after they left, my boss, and to his/her credit—just prior to the end of the meeting he/she had indicated to me that he/she would like me to stay after the meeting was over, so the meeting finished, away they went, and the associate sat down and talked and said, "Mr./Mrs. _____, I'm going to overrule your decision," and that was the resolution of it. The little boy came back in; I explained to the parents that, yes—or the boss contacted the parents and said that basically their appeal was decided in their favor; their son would continue, and away it went from there. I think the program that he received the next year was equally fine. I guess, to a certain extent, my feeling of loss was that it still continued to affect the program for that one group of students; and other things were put into place, certainly, to try and accommodate. We restructured, for example, the program aide's time so that she could be out there with this little boy at recess and so on, you know, so that some things were done. But it was very obvious that, when you took a look at it, the reason for being with this group was to stay with his friends, but that these children

were no longer friends with this little boy. Well, they were friends of a sort, but not that they could play with him, because they no longer had anything in common. We were talking about little boys who were now getting to be ten years old with a little boy who was basically functioning at maybe about a two- or three-year-old level and made it very difficult.

So that was the conflict; that's how it was resolved. It was interesting, you know, the feelings; certainly a lot of discomfort. The staff knew exactly what my decision was and what my recommendation was, and they certainly became aware that as far as the appeal went, I lost, they won, because in those situations that's exactly what it is: It is a win-lose situation. It does come down on one side or the other in the end. As I indicated to staff, what we have to do now is say that, okay, we lost the decision, but we have to set up the program the best we can to try and maybe accomplish what we wanted to accomplish anyway.

Strategies

The principal in this scenario used many strategies to handle this conflict situation (Table 3). Accommodation had been used for many years because the parents wanted an inclusive education for their child. It was used as well when the appeal process ruled against the school. A restructuring took place, but within limits set by the staff and the principal. The principal used management of information in sharing only the one-sided difficulties that the student, teachers, and classmates had experienced. An appeal to norms was made in statements that referred to what was best for all children. Buying time was evident in the number of discussions with the parents and in the constant reflection on the pros and cons with the staff and by the administrator. Power-force came into play but was pushed by the parents, who asked for a bottom-line decision from the principal and received it. Bargaining, negotiating back and forth, and trying to convince the parents took place as well. Mollifying and mending was

Table 3

Emergent Strategies

	Strategy	Participants 1	2	3	4	5	6	f total
	Power - force	✓	✓	✓		✓		4
	Directive	✓						1
	Managing - buying time	✓	✓	✓				3
	Partial resolution - keep going at all costs	✓	✓	✓				3
	Movement to new order	✓			✓			2
	Management of coalitions	✓	✓	✓			✓	4
*	Event recognition	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
*	Physical - showing support	✓						1
	Modeling - setting an example or alternatives	✓		✓				2
	Accommodation		✓					1
	Management of information		✓	✓		✓	✓	4
	Appealing, adhering to norms		✓	✓				2
	Bargaining		✓	✓				2
	Mollifying, mending		✓			✓		2
	Expert advice		✓	✓	✓		✓	4
	Maintaining order		✓				✓	2
*	Role reversal		✓					1
	Backing off			✓				1
	Compromise			✓	✓			2
	Affect					✓	✓	2
	Avoidance						✓	1
	# of strategies used	9	13	12	4	5	7	

* New emergent strategies from interviews
† Unused
f Frequency of conflict management strategy used in the six interviews

the starting point for the relationship between the parents and the principal, but as the conflict escalated, the flavor changed, and professionalism or maintaining order was used.

The principal chose to manage several coalitions—teachers and other concerned parents—for support or to represent their views, or both. Expert advice was sought through the use of consultants as well as the parents of a Down's syndrome child met in a discussion format with the parents in question and the principal.

The result of the conflict appeared to be a partial resolution because the decision on handling the situation came from a central office. There was already a confirmation that the adjustment by the staff and the principal to this child would be the best correction possible with all views kept in mind. The final management of the conflict would come when the child completed the required number of years at this school and moved on.

Event recognition occurred when the parents and the principal reached an impasse and a decision was requested.

In subsequent interview questioning a new strategy appeared from this particular scenario, role reversal, which allows each person involved to try to take the other's viewpoint. The strategy was used, but it was not noted how successful it was.

This interview produced the following conflict-management strategies: (a) accommodation; (b) management of information; (c) appealing, adhering to norms; (d) buying time; (e) power-force; (f) bargaining; (g) mollifying, mending; (h) maintaining order; (i) management of coalitions; (j) expert advice; (k) partial resolution; (l) event recognition; and (m) role reversal. See Table 3.

Participant #3 (Principal)

Scenario: "The Strap, or Discipline Hurts"

A new principal was appointed to a school in which the majority of the staff had waited for a "strapping" man to take charge. In his or her own words, Participant #3 (Principal) described the following conflict situation:

> The school had been in operation for about five or six years. The previous principal had opened the school. He was an artsy kind of person; a lot of emphasis in the school on arts and music. The design of the building, the color scheme, emphasis on literature. And it happens that he didn't believe in using the strap for badly behaved children. The neighborhood was a very tough neighborhood; lots of problems, lots of families with problems, plus lots of kids with bad behavior, and lots of frustrated teachers. Discipline was a big issue when I got there.
> Unbeknownst to the staff, I also didn't believe in strapping, so when I got there, they thought, Oh, good! Here comes the new principal. It's a man, so he'll help us get these kids under control by strapping them. That was 1980, before the board set the policy about strapping. Strapping was still authorized under board policy, and many principals did use the strap for dealing with kids with chronic bad behavior. But it happens that, philosophically, I don't believe in that. I didn't then and never did, and as a teacher, and I still don't. So in our first staff meeting I told the staff that that was my thinking. They were very disappointed. We talked about it a bit; I suggested that we explore alternatives, that we look at different ways to get kids turned around: Use consequences, a discipline plan where we have clear behavior expectations, and each classroom has its consequences, and use kind of the reality therapy—deal with the kid; decide on the problem, the solution; get some inservices by experts on some of the alternatives to strapping kids; and setting up a school discipline plan. But you can imagine the teachers, many of them, were very frustrated. I thought they were not willing to explore other alternatives because they very much felt that for most kids the only way to get their attention was to strap them, so they weren't as receptive to exploring alternatives as they could have been.
> So we kind of struggled with this September, October, November. And I remember it was the December staff meeting, I made an announcement that I thought was going to go towards resolving the conflict. I talked to the staff about this. We had had a lot of troubles between myself and the staff. The teachers were coming to me with lots of reasons why we should be strapping kids, and I started to

get suspicious that they were actually going out *looking* for examples, at times even inventing some. And, of course, I was doing the opposite: looking for reasons and showing examples, reasons why we should be using other methods. But there were a number, probably about five or six teachers out of twenty, who were adamant that we should be strapping, so lots of struggles. So by the December staff meeting, I had decided in my mind—and I should say at this time that the vice-principal that I was working with also believed in strapping, so the administration wasn't together on it. . . . So by the December staff meeting I had thought it over, so I announced to the staff that I was thereby authorizing the expenditure of I think it was three dollars and sixty cents to purchase one strap for our school, and I said, "It is board policy that we can strap kids, but there are certain steps we must follow, and," I said, "I won't strap kids, but if you as teachers feel that the only recourse is to strap children or to turn them around is to use the strap, then you have permission to use the strap." I said, "I'm finding this hard to do, because it's hard personally when philosophically I don't believe in it, and yet I'm allowing it in a school that I'm principal of." But I said, "This was getting in the way of us working together on other things, so I think I need to do this now to get this behind us and get on with other things, right? If you feel that you need to use the strap, you must do these things: Use the assistant principal's office, have a witness, phone the parents and let them know beforehand, record the number of times, and all that stuff. You set that all up." It did relieve the tension, and we did get on with things. And by the end of that school year a number of our kids were strapped, mostly by the assistant principal. Some kids were strapped a number of times, and I did ask about that, and the question was, "If the strap is the answer, then would you not think that that one time would be enough, since it's sort of a last—some kids have been strapped several times?" So we had a previous discussion about it in the spring; the long and the short of it was, the assistant principal moved to another school at the end of that year, and two or three of the group of five moved to other schools at the end of that year. I brought in some new teachers. A new assistant principal that came in, we were on the same wavelength regarding the use of the strap. The new teachers that we brought in had similar views on that issue, and so it didn't become an issue from then on after that first year. It was awful. We weren't getting anywhere.

Strategies

Multiple strategies were used to manage this conflict. Bargaining began the list of strategies, and discussion and proposed planning resulted. Information was managed so that only the principal gave the reasons for using alternatives to strapping.

Management of coalitions was attempted twice. The first attempt failed because the teachers and the assistant principal did not offer support for the principal's views. The second attempt, using the process of buying time (the following school year), allowed for new, successful coalitions to form (a stacking of the deck with new, more receptive teachers).

Looking at board policy on strapping (appealing/adhering to norms) was the beginning of the backing-off process, which allowed for time and for tension to be relieved so that other pertinent matters could be handled. Expert advice was used in the form of inservicing, and experts were brought to the school. Power or force was also used in a direct request to teachers to develop a classroom discipline policy. The principal also chose to model alternative discipline procedures to his/her staff members. Compromise prevailed throughout the rest of the year so that the situation could be rethought and regroupings could be achieved. This partial resolution became more complete through staff transfers and replacement of philosophically anti-strapping teachers and the assistant principal. The event recognition for the principal resulted in breaking the deadlock, the level of frustration, so that other work could be completed.

In summation, this principal used the conflict strategies of (a) bargaining; (b) management of information; (c) management of

coalitions; (d) appeal, adhering to norms; (e) backing off; (f) buying time; (g) expert advice; (h) power-force; (i) modeling; (j) compromise; (k) partial resolution; and (l) event recognition. These are referred to in Table 3 (page 44).

Participant #4 (Secretary)

Scenario: "Medical Emergency"

This story involves a secretary who had decided as one of her goals in her working environment to create a medical release form so that she felt comfortable in administering medication or taking care of students' accidents at school. The following is his/her conflict-management story:

> In 1989 or 1990 it began as a goal to develop or to write some kind of a release form for parents to sign so that I felt comfortable administering medication or taking care of accidents that students were involved in at the school. It should have been a very simple goal, except that once I started to pull up the information from the school board on the administration of medication and emergency procedures, I didn't quite like what I was reading, so I decided to contact the Red Cross; the Board of Health, which is now the Health Authority; and St. John Ambulance, and just ask them some of their procedures or what they thought about a person who has first-aid training giving what I considered at the time high-end medication or dealing with a lot of blood.
> So the first thing I had to do was, I wrote the goal down, and then I had a meeting with my principal. We talked about it, and he/she supported me writing up the form or developing a form, with his/her assistance, so I did start to do that.
> He/she also decided that he/she should ask the boss at the time, if there was going to be any liability, if we could even ask parents to do this. I had stated that, yes, we could ask parents to do this, as evidenced by the fact in the *Operational Handbook* that it says that the principal shall require a signed request form from the parent and the physician indicating the type of medication to be administered, and there's other information that goes along with that. Anyway, the boss wasn't sure if we really should follow through with this, of making a form. So he/she said that the board lawyer would contact me, so the board lawyer did contact me, and he/she said that if ever there was a

problem, that I really didn't need a form, that I was only doing first aid, that I was not a doctor; therefore, I was not giving medical assistance, I was doing first aid; that there would be no problem, and of course they would defend any of their school board employees should anything happen. Well, now I really didn't feel quite comfortable with him saying that.

Then there was another person that contacted me; he/she was the person who interpreted policy for the board, and he/she felt that at the time that this was actually a big issue and that getting into a form and everything was just too much. He/She had some concerns; he/she would look into it, but there were other bigger problems brewing within the organization, meaning everyday problems, whether it was custodial suspensions or layoffs or whatever, that those were much more important than worrying about a form to have parents sign to administer medication.

Anyway, I felt that I had to carry through with this goal because I had written it out as one of my goals, so I decided that I would end up developing the form and not sure if I would end up using it in the end, but I did develop the form. We ended up having an epileptic, a diabetic, so we had insulin in the school, we had ritalin in the school, we had an epi pin in the school, and we had a child who needed to be catheterized. And as a school secretary, I felt when I read the IHCD policy code in the *Operational Handbook* on the administration of medication, I felt that they were really taking advantage of a school secretary in the office to take responsibility for children for their medication that maybe parents should be responsible for or that someone that had more medical experience should be doing, not just a trained aide or the school secretary.

Anyway, as far as the epi pin goes, the part of the incident that came up with that was, an epi pin is a pin that you administer to a child who's having a reaction to a bee sting, and it started with that, saying, "Well, does an epi pin break the skin? How do you give it?" Apparently, it's very easy to give. I've never given one, but we had one in the school in case this particular child got stung by a bee. Anyway, I was trained on how to use the epi pin, but never had to use it. I decided at the same time to phone the Red Cross and St. John Ambulance to ask them, "When you use an epi pin, is it like giving a needle?" meaning, is it like giving an insulin shot, or something like that, anyway. As it turned out it wasn't, but it does break the skin. What I found out at that time was that the Red Cross and St. John Ambulance do not recommend even taking out slivers because slivers are considered an invasive procedure, which means that you go under the skin and that you're opening up body fluids. So now we're into the HIV era and a lot of children who are carriers of hepatitis, and I'm thinking that there a number of children that come down to the office just for slivers, and now I'm doing what is considered an invasive procedure.

And even though now my goal is just to develop a form to administer meds to children, it seems to be turning out to be more than that, in my view.
So I went to the principal and I talked to him/her, and I told him/her that the Red Cross and St. John Ambulance didn't even recommend taking out slivers, and they also asked if I had needles in the school that were sterilized. Well, at most schools you don't have needles; you use a sewing needle/pin, but you don't really have a needle. If you have a needle, then those have to be under lock and key, and those are the kinds of needles that, let's say, a diabetic would use, and those should not be left around. Teachers, parents, staff go into the medical room on a regular basis, and not everything is locked up, so most schools only have just a sewing-type pin, and what they do is, they put a little bit of hydrogen peroxide on the needle and remove the sliver. A lot of people put the needle back in the drawer. Well, now that I'm told that is an invasive procedure, I'm a little concerned with taking that same needle that's just had a little bit of somebody else's body fluid on it and going under the next child's skin to remove a sliver.
So it came to the point where I took a stand and said, "I will no longer remove slivers. As minor as it might be, I will no longer remove slivers. It's not recommended." It's recommended that we put a bandage on it, tell the child that we don't have any sharp pins or anything and that they should go home and get their parents to take it out. But as a school secretary or a compassionate adult, I felt really awful saying that I would not take out a child's sliver. And you as a parent would like me to take out, I'm sure, your child's sliver. Your child won't die, but you'd probably like me to take it out so your little child was taken care of while you were at work or whatever. Anyway, I made the decision that I would no longer do those kinds of procedures based on what the Red Cross said and the St. John Ambulance. I contacted the Board of Health, and they said exactly the same thing: not to do it. Put a bandaid on it, and you don't have the proper equipment. And if the school nurse was in the school and a child came in and asked to have the sliver taken out, they would not take out the sliver; they don't do that. So now, here I am as a school secretary, and I'm being asked to do a lot more things than just take out slivers.
So anyway, I wrote up the form for my goal—I developed it—and it had on it the requirements from the school board, which was to have a place where the parent was to sign and a place where the physician was to sign. But what was very interesting, I tried it on one parent where the child was taking ritalin, and I was to administer the ritalin to the child once a day for hyperactivity. What ended up happening was, I sent the form home, and it asked for the type of medication, the required dosage, and the hazards, the side effects, and all those things; and what ended up happening was, the parent signed it and sent it back and said that she had no time to go

to the doctor, and the dosage and everything was written on the label that was on the bottle, and just give it to the child. So I felt that I was really up against a couple of things: one, that the board wasn't really supporting me—not my principal, because my principal was supporting me, but the board was not supporting me; and they didn't want to make it an issue because then it would become a public issue as well as a political issue. And so therefore, in that case, I continued to give the child his ritalin without following through on the form, as well as not complying with what was in the *Operational Handbook* because nobody seemed to be wanting to follow through with it.
In 1995 the Health Authority finally came out with a statement because of all the HIV that's around and because of all the hepatitis B that is going around, evidenced by the fact that they're now inoculating all Year Five students in the school board for hepatitis. They've now come out with a guideline, I guess it is. And, going back to the sliver incident, it says:

If a child has a sliver, it's recommended that the sliver be left intact with a bandage placed over the area if needed. The child can then have the sliver removed at home. Tweezers and pins should not be used for removal of slivers at school. These items can easily become contaminated with blood, especially where there is multiple use between children.

So exactly what I had been saying five years ago has now come around. But the school board, their *Operational Handbook* guideline for administration of medication has still not changed. They still basically say that "the principal shall be responsible and prepared to undertake the implied responsibility, and the principal should make appropriate arrangements with the child's teacher or another reliable adult willing to administer the prescribed medication and undertake its safekeeping." So, really, what it just boiled down to, as far as I was concerned, it really didn't matter what it was, if you were assigned the task of administering medication or being the first-aid person, you were protected by the board lawyers, but they weren't going to do anything about it. So in the end I felt that I could not complete the goal. I did complete the goal of writing the form, but I could not carry through or follow through with having the parent and the doctor sign the forms for all children. I probably could do it for one or two children, where parents took the responsibility to take the form to the physician to be signed, but, all in all, it wasn't worth the hassle that I was creating. And it also wasn't worth the hassle when the people who did write policy phoned me from downtown, and they were very, very questioning, so I let it go.

Strategies

The secretary in this scenario sought expert advice to manage her conflict. Voluntarily, she sought the advice of the principal, who in turn felt it necessary to seek advice from central office, the lawyer representing the school board, and a school board policy maker. A distinction was made between solicited and unsolicited advice in this scenario. The secretary then examined the policy code in a staff handbook of regulations and referred to the Red Cross, St. John Ambulance, and the local board of health.

The event recognition took place when the secretary realized that a compromise must be reached for this employment to continue. A refusal to fulfil some duties of the job and an acceptance of other duties was the resulting compromise. Within this compromise, refusing to do some kinds of procedures based on expert advice could be considered a movement to a new order, which was also achieved by the secretary's conducting research and a trial run of the proposed document to determine its feasibility.

In summary, the secretary used the strategies of (a) expert advice, (b) compromise, (c) event recognition, and (d) movement to a new order. These are referred to in Table 3 (page 44).

Participant #5 (Secretary)

Scenario: "Lost in Space"

This school-based incident happened to a secretary who was normally involved in handling missing or forgotten keys and unattainable parents. Participant #5's (Secretary) story is as follows:

This happened in 1995, and it took place after school. I had a student in Grade 3 with a younger brother in Grade 2 who came to the office after school because they had lost their house key, and they didn't know what to do. So I phoned their home, and their mother wasn't home. Dad was a bus driver and not easily available, so I phoned Mom at work, and all I could get was an answering machine. I believe she was a student; she was unavailable. And a friend, another girl in Grade 3, said that they could go to her house. So I allowed her to phone her mom, and her mom said it was okay that should they come there. That was my first mistake, because I didn't actually talk to the mom myself. They assured me they only lived three streets apart, and that was my second mistake, because I didn't double-check. I did ask them twice to make sure that they lived three streets apart; they assured me, yes, they did. So I sent them off to that first house. I phoned to see if they'd got there, and they had not. I called in about five, ten minutes, and they were just arriving. I talked to the girls, and I told the girls that they should go to their home and put a note with a phone number on the door to tell where they were. I told the older sister of the family to walk the girls to the door, put the note on the door, and then walk them home. It was probably well after four o'clock by this time. The older girl said she would do it, and they went off. So I phoned back to the house again to see if they'd been there and back, and there was no answer, so I phoned again later; I phoned two or three times. I phoned back again later. I got the father who lived at the home. He said, "They're not here," so I thanked him, told him the situation, told him I'd phone again. So I phoned back, and the children were just returning to the home. And it seems that when they got to the home to put the note on the door, they met up with the mom whose children had lost the key, so the other kids went home. I thought this was great. It was now a quarter to five. Just tracking just to make sure they were okay; I didn't think too much of it. This is where the conflict comes in.

I was working the next day, and the father came into the office, of the children who had lost the key. He came into the school, and I knew when he came that he was coming for me. He marched into the office, and he asked, "Who's Mrs. _____?" There were people all over the place, and my supervisor was there, and I said, "I'm Mrs. _____." He said, "I hear that you sent my kids out to wander the streets on their own yesterday afternoon," so I quickly did a little flip through my mind here. I saw my supervisor looking at me, horrified, and I knew nobody would say anything, so I stood up; I did not want to be in a sitting position. Everybody was watching. My heart was pumping, and I knew I had to explain to him, but I'm not used to going face to face with people over a conflict. I sort of drew in my breath, and I assured him that I certainly did not send his children out to wander all over the streets. I was standing up in a power

position, and everybody was watching. I laid out all the steps I had done, and I asked him what it is that he thought I should have done in that circumstance, and he wasn't really sure, but he insisted that I should have phoned him on his bus. Well, we keep binders with all the information sheets, so I got out the binder, and I found the page for his child. I explained to him the reason I didn't call him, because it was clear on that sheet that he was a bus driver, and the children told me he was at work. So I said, "In the future, if there's any problem, no matter what, would you like me to call you?" I said to him. "I'll put a page alert." So I wrote in big letters on the sheet, "Call no matter what." He left. I was shaking, and everybody was looking. I was reasonably calm, and the supervisor did compliment me on the way I handled it. I didn't lose my temper even though I was angry because he was accusing me of sending his kids out, even though I was tracking them for forty-five minutes, but it bugged me that I was dealing with somebody like that.
The next day at lunchtime I saw him in the school again, hanging about in the foyer of the school. It was quiet in the office, and he came up to me, and he said that he was sorry that he offended me, and he'd like to apologize. I put my hand out and I said, "I'm a parent too, and I understand your problem," and I could tell he was really scared and that it was really hard for him to do that, and so I tried to make it as easy as I could. So he apologized again and said that he understood that. I thought that it was resolved in a way I never would have expected it to be, so that was my little conflict.

Strategies

The secretary in this scenario employed management of information at two different times. The first was the attempted contacting of the students' parents. Upon reflection, the secretary conceded that the completion of this event would have defused the conflict. Second, the laying out of the procedures following the confrontation with the father employed management of information. The conflict-management strategy to match the parent's assertiveness or force took on a physical quality when the secretary stood up and faced the parent with a desk between them. The secretary used affect and allowed the aggressor to save face. She kept her voice at

an even tone and made a conscious attempt to control her temper. As well, mollifying or mending fences resulted through an offered apology which was accepted by the secretary.

Event recognition came at the time of the initial confrontation. Management of the conflict was deemed successful by the participating secretary.

The secretary used the tactics of (a) management of information; (b) power-force; (c) affect; (d) mollifying, mending fences; and (e) event recognition (Table 3, page 44).

Participant #6 (Secretary)

Scenario: "Feeling Used"

This conflict story was related by a secretary whose duties in a large school were very hectic and time consuming. His/her contact with the child involved occurred over a period of three years. Participant #6 (Secretary) related his/her story:

> This is a story about a girl that we had at school, a very bright student, problems initially starting with her parents. Her parents were separated, and she started living with her mother and then lived with her father. Problems with the father's girlfriend. It was a difficult situation because she was an angry girl. In her Grade 5 year we became good friends because she was continually down in the office. The counsellor wasn't always here. I kind of became her confidante in a way, which seems to be a part of her job as a part-time counsellor. We became good friends, and she kind of told me some of her problems, and I started to know the parents on a first-name basis, which we do with a *lot* of our parents. She ended up in a foster home because she stole from her parents. Again, she was a bright student, she knew what she was doing, she was good at school.
> In her Grade 6, that we were very good friends, she became very demanding. She felt that she was the only one in the school that needed to use the telephone all the time to call Legal Aid or a foster home. She'd call her foster home and was manipulating her foster mother as well, we felt. We didn't know her story; we didn't know how she felt inside.

One day she came into the office very belligerent, as she often did, late, and everybody else is supposed to adjust to *her* problem. We were always continually phoning the parents, trying to find out where she was. We felt sometimes that she should be restricted more from the administration, for the telephone any time of the day, and her demands for other things: to leave the school when she felt like it and to have her friends in when she felt like it. And the friends weren't particularly nice.

Partly the kind of hurt that really did become a conflict, because she was being very demanding and starting to call me names because I wouldn't let her use the phone. She liked to have friends around her. So as she left she was really upset, and so I said, "Well, _____, I guess I thought we were friends, but," I said, "don't expect anything from me from now on." That was the first time I'd ever said that to a student.

The next day she came in and she was talking to the counsellor, because the counsellor had heard what was going on. It was the counsellor who talked to her, and she *did* apologize the next day, but it wasn't a true apology, I didn't think. But she continued to get away with or felt that she should be treated special. This was something that really annoyed both of us. I think the administration let her do her own thing, which I didn't think was right. Why should she be different than any other student? So we talked to her foster mother and said that she'd better check on her more regularly because she was telling the foster mother that she was at different friends', and I said to the foster mother, "Do you know that she was really *there?*" And the foster mother didn't seem to really clue in to any of that. A difficult situation all the way around.

Anyway, she ended up finishing Grade 9. I hadn't seen her lately, and then I did see her, and she was hollering "Hi!" and seemed happy to see me. I talked to her mother, and apparently she's doing quite well.

It was a conflict story that was very frustrating to us because you hated to see her walk into the office. I felt that in that case the administration should have set rules for *all* students to toe the line. We're not going to take an hour out of our day to try to adjust to one situation. It might have been special to her, but there were a lot of kids in that situation.

The counsellor was very good, and they ended up—both parents and others; she had a social worker; she was getting money through foster care or from her parents—she ended up going to see a motivation speaker, and the foster mother has paid for this girl to go and see this. So there was just a total manipulation. To me that was a conflict, was the total manipulation of all of the people involved in her life—involved her parents and involved the foster mother, both of us in the office, and other students as well. That's a very broad spectrum.

Strategies

In this scenario the participating secretary used the management of affect as a conflict-management technique. Knowing the child's background, he/she offered friendship which bordered on mothering or mentorship. The secretary recognized the need for an appeal to maintain norms but felt powerless or perceived a lack of support in this area, which left this an unused option, or avoidance.

Management of coalitions as well as management of information were used to open up and maintain the lines of communication with the mother and foster mother. Expert advice was sought from the counsellor and the social worker filling this need. Event recognition resulted during a bottom-line incident for the secretary, and the resulting response was maintaining order.

This secretary used the following tactics: (a) management of affect, (b) avoidance, (c) management of coalitions, (d) expert advice, (e) management of information, (f) maintaining order, and (g) event recognition, which are noted in Table 3 (page 44).

Analysis

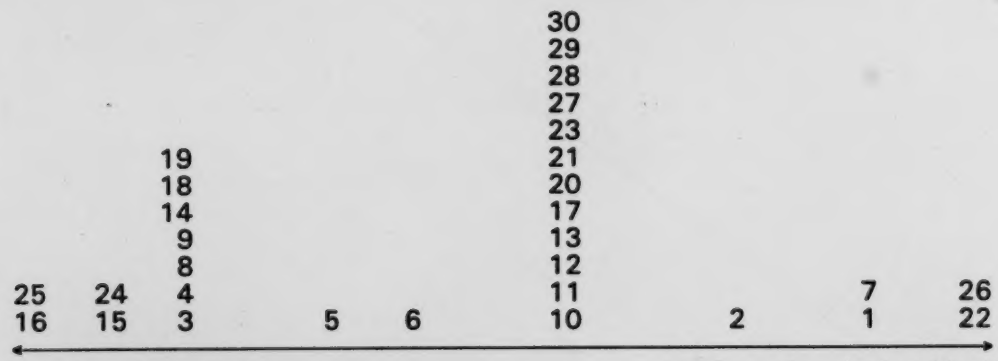
The data collected for this research revealed evidence that principals and secretaries attempted to manage conflict. In most of the cases the management was child centered. All participants seemed aware of the win-lose approach to conflict and clearly avoided an ultimatum situation unless it was forced (Table 4).

Each participant described a conflict story which, over time, resulted in conflict management or resolution.

Table 4

Continuum of Strategies and Emergent Strategies and the Perceived Effects on Their Outcomes

1. Collaboration
2. Bargaining
3. Power - force
4. Avoidance
5. Accommodation
6. Compromise
7. Empowerment - developer
8. Sanction - rewards/punishment
9. Directive
10. Expert advice
11. Management of information
12. Management of coalitions
13. Appealing, adhering to norms
14. Maintaining order
15. Backing off
16. Personal attack
17. Affect
18. Protecting personal interests
19. Controlling environment
20. Mollifying, mending
21. Managing, buying time; preparation
22. Movement to a new order
23. Death of power (change)
24. Partial resolution - shaky alliance - to keep going at all costs
25. Partial resolution - shaky alliance - leading to death
26. Sensitivity training
*27. Event recognition
*28. Physical — showing support
*29. Modeling
*30. Role reversal



* Additions from research findings

Note. For ease and clarification, strategies were assigned numbers and placed on the continuum. A larger, more comprehensive chart could be developed.

It is recognized here that principals and secretaries in varying time frames may choose from one or many of these strategies to manage a problem. For example, some strategies imply an authoritarian power; some imply fence sitting or reflecting back on what is required or has been done before. The other end of the continuum implies more freedom in the problem solution. A more positive outcome is implied, as well as a more negative outcome (Luthans & Kreitner, 1975).

Conflict-management strategies were extracted from the six interviews (words and phrases) and categorized. Table 3 (page 44) shows individual conflict-management techniques from the research findings, and a summary of conflict-management techniques from all participants resulted. Also noted was the number of times that the conflict-management strategy was used, as well as the number of strategies used by each participant.

Four new emergent strategies resulted from the analysis of the interviews. All six interviewees recognized that a conflict was occurring and that there was a need to manage it (event recognition). The second strategy that emerged was a physical show of approval or support, such as hugging, which is a positive body-language tool. The third strategy that emerged was an intentional modeling of desired behavior in the hope that others would imitate it. The fourth new emergent strategy was role reversal, which is an attempt to allow one participant in the conflict to see another's point of view. These strategies can be placed on a continuum (see Table 4), which was first referred to in Chapter 2. For ease and clarification, the strategies were assigned numbers and placed on the continuum. A larger, more comprehensive chart could be developed with more volunteers.

It is recognized here that principals and secretaries in varying time frames may choose from one or many of these strategies to manage a problem. For example, some strategies imply an authoritarian power; some imply fence sitting or reflecting back on what is required or has been done before. The other end of the continuum implies more freedom in the problem solution. A more positive outcome is implied, as well as a more negative outcome (Luthans & Kreitner, 1975).

In order to analyse or reduce the data collected, two processes were involved. A deductive process was used to look at the existing literature on conflict strategies. The breaking-down and categorizing are outlined in the synthesis part of the literature review (Chapter 2), and Table 1 resulted. The deductive process also allowed for partial evidence and confirmation or nonconfirmation of strategies that were found in the literature.

An inductive process was used to look at the new categories that emerged that were not found in the literature. These new findings were added to Table 1 to reinforce that the participants used some strategies from the literature as well as some not described, emergent strategies. The complete analysis is fixed in Table 5.

Phrases were chosen as the unit of analysis. This seemed to be the most appropriate coding for these data. The phrases chosen were those that appeared to use terminology or sounded as though they spoke about categories of conflict strategies from the literature. The second filtering process was to look for any phrases that referred to conflict strategies that did not appear in the literature (inductive). The open coding and development of general categories place principals' conflict-management strategies in the same groups or use them as emergent strategies from the interviews. Table 5 synthesizes the literature findings and parallels emergent findings from the research to reveal any new strategies not discussed in the literature.

What conflict strategies do principals and secretaries use to manage conflict? A review of the data as well as the literature (Chapter 2) indicates that conflict management is an ongoing trial-and-error process. Recognition of a situation as a conflict is a key factor.

Table 5

Synthesis of Conflict-Management Strategies

Strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	f
1. Collaboration	✓	✓					✓							✓		4
2. Bargaining	✓							✓							✓	3
3. Power - force	✓	✓			✓	✓								✓	✓	6
4. Avoidance		✓							✓					✓	✓	4
5. Accommodation		✓												✓	✓	3
6. Compromise		✓		✓										✓	✓	4
7. Empowerment - developer			✓	✓									✓			3
8. Sanction - rewards/punishment				✓	✓				✓		✓					4
9. Directive				✓												1
10. Expert advice				✓											✓	2
11. Management of information					✓				✓						✓	3
12. Management of coalitions					✓				✓						✓	3
13. Appealing, adhering to norms					✓				✓					✓	✓	4
14. Maintaining order					✓										✓	2
15. Backing off					✓										✓	2
16. Personal attack					✓	✓			✓							3
17. Affect					✓										✓	2
18. Protecting personal interests					✓											2

(table continues)

Strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	f
19. Controlling environment					✓				✓							2
20. Mollifying, mending					✓										✓	2
21. Managing, buying time; preparation					✓				✓					✓	✓	4
22. Movement to a new order						✓		✓							✓	3
23. Death of power (change)						✓										1
24. Partial resolution - shaky alliance - to keep going at all costs						✓		✓							✓	3
25. Partial resolution - shaky alliance - leading to death						✓										1
26. Sensitivity training								✓			✓					2
27. Event recognition															✓	1
28. Role reversal															✓	1
29. Physical															✓	1
30. Modeling															✓	1

1 = Owens
2 = Hanson
3 = Barth
4 = Maurer
5 = Fris
6 = Mintzberg
7 = Kirkwood
8 = Luthans (Litterer)
9 = Loewen
10 = Likert and Likert
11 = Deutsch
12 = Luthans and Kreitner
13 = Sergiovanni
14 = Miskiw
15 = research findings from 6 interviews
f = frequency

All participants identified where their bottom line was or where their conflict took a turn. This was referred to in Table 4 (page 59) and Table 5 (page 62) as *event recognition,* a new emergent strategy without which the conflicts might have continued to be ongoing, escalating, or never completely settled issues. Event recognition seems to start the participants in the conflict on a new or divergent course. Respondent 1 qualified his/her moment as a realization of frustration, whereas the others saw their event recognition as a less vocalized and more internal bottom line that had been reached. This bottom line dealt with philosophical issues such as the use of corporal punishment or a concern for all students (participants 2, 3, and 4). It may also be addressed on an emotional level, which would represent the level of response of participants 5 and 6.

This recognition of a conflict was a common thread throughout the findings. The recognition, or in some cases the bottom line, was reached and a new course was carved out for the conflict-management process. Deutsch (1973) addressed this perception of a situation, but perhaps the analysis should go further to include the "bottom line," where one cannot continue with the status quo, and a different direction is sought.

The second emergent conflict strategy, role reversal (Table 5, page 62), lent a dramatic flavor to conflict-management. The idea of stepping into someone else's shoes or walking a mile in someone else's shoes appeared to be a request not just for sympathy, but also for empathy, which, if successful, could lead to an understanding of the other side of the conflict story.

The third emergent strategy deals with the physical nature of the human species. A demonstration of support—whether it is a physical presence, a pat on the back, or a hug—might help to manage a conflict in progress.

The final emergent strategy also took on a somewhat theatrical quality. "Walking the talk" or modeling a desired conflict-management technique or techniques. This would imply that a role model influences others to emulate behavior in dealing with conflict. Two assumptions were made by the users of this strategy: first, that others want to add to or to correct their own conflict strategies; and second, that others regard the modeled behavior as appropriate.

The most commonly used strategies from the findings (see Table 3, page 44) were power-force, event recognition, management of coalitions, management of information, and expert advice. The next most common were managing or buying time and partial resolution (in three cases). Movement to a new order, appealing/adhering to norms, bargaining, mollifying and mending, maintaining order, and compromise were used in two cases; and directive, physical accommodation, role reversal, backing off, and avoidance were used in only one case.

An examination of the strategies from the literature that were not used leads to three interesting conclusions. The first is that the exclusion of strategies such as sanction-rewards/punishment, personal attack, protecting personal interests, and controlling environment may be due to the type of respondents used in this study; or it may imply a servicing, caring work force in the educational field where lose-lose strategies (Tables 2 and 4) are not used as often. This may also reflect a difference between people, service industries, and those

businesses with a nonhuman product as interesting and worthy of further research.

The second set of strategies mentioned in the literature but not used by the participants in the study were collaboration, empowerment, death of power (change), sensitivity training. These are newer, less discussed or known conflict-management strategies and cluster closer to the win-win end of the continuum (Tables 2 and 4). The participants in this research might not have been exposed to or educated in these particular strategies. Conflict management may be a learned process, and this learning and selection process merits further study.

Partial resolution-shaky alliance-leading to death is situated closer to the lose-lose end of the continuum (Tables 2 and 4). Lack of knowledge about the further consequences of the conflict or of the existence of these strategies might explain this.

The literature on conflict management and its strategies and the findings of this study have blended some strategies, new ones have emerged; as well, the possible positive and negative implications of the strategies used were addressed. Sample size may have had some bearing on the above and needs to be taken into consideration.

CHAPTER V

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The main questions of this research were twofold:

1. What were secretaries' and principals' experiences of conflict?
2. What conflict-management strategies did they use?

The naturalistic inquiry method was chosen to study conflict strategies used by principals and secretaries in an educational setting. The use of the critical incident technique to foster the description of actual events contributed to further insight in this research. Common strategies in principals' and secretaries' conflict-management techniques emerged. This was developed by comparing the different language used to describe the conflict situations. Patterns emerged based on the information collected.

In a review of the findings, a basic theme emerged that conflict management appears to be an ongoing trial-and-error process. Strategies recognized in the literature were confirmed, as well as four emergent conflict strategies. These emergent strategies include event recognition, which acknowledges that a conflict is occurring; a physical show of approval or support; an intentional modeling of desired behavior in the hopes of imitation by others; and, lastly, role reversal, which encourages the opposing side to see another's point of view.

A review of commonly used strategies from the literature and the findings of this study revealed that not all strategies were used. These strategies, placed on a lose-lose to win-win continuum, appear to

show that a trend or movement towards a positive solution or change is not only verbalized, but also an actuality.

As well, the findings may have exposed a gap in the conflict-management education of principals and secretaries. Also apparent was the larger number of strategies used by principals as compared to the small repertoire of strategies used by secretaries. After each interview I sensed a powerlessness because of the limits of the secretary's or the principal's position in the school bureaucracy.

Conclusion

Conflict and its management pervade every aspect of our lives. Conflict management has been addressed in the business sector, but little has been written for the educational setting. Reflection on specific conflict stories that used principals and secretaries as narrators allowed for confirmation of conflict strategies found in the literature and for new strategies not yet discussed or partially discussed to emerge. The study of conflict and its strategies for partial or full resolution of a conflict situation will help us to understand better how to cope with day-to-day situations that involve a conflict.

The principals and secretaries who were involved in the study often had many conflict stories from which to choose. All participants viewed conflict and its management as a learning experience (Holder, 1991).

The common thread throughout these scenarios was the telling of self or the realization that there was a conflict (often referred to as the *bottom line*) and that a turning or managing point had to emerge for

the movement towards partial or full management in the participant's mind.

Conflict management was expressed as a complex process where many strategies—some ongoing, some simultaneous, some alone—were unfolding. The employment of a strategy with an unsuccessful result led to the use of new strategies. The final outcome appears to be management of the situation through strategies which have degrees of toleration for the participant.

My study and future studies on conflict and its management strategies will increase the knowledge in this area. Trial and error conflict management is not good enough. Educating children, secretaries, support staff, teachers, principals, and central-office staff in these strategies will leave not only school staff members, but also a growing part of society knowledgeable about conflict and its successful containment or management.

Implications for Future Research

Supplying the other side of the conflict story may be a valuable tool in comparing not only strategies, but also perspectives of the conflict escalation or de-escalation. These perspectives of the final or ongoing conflict management could be compared on a continuum of win-win to lose-lose.

Another study could look at one participant in multiple conflicts to investigate the commonality of strategies used; if the conflicts developed over a longer period of time, whether any learning occurred as to conflict-management strategies; and whether the learning was

used or disregarded. A questionnaire format could be developed to yield this information.

Comparisons between school staff members with conflict-management training and those without training (trial and error) as to the use of a repertoire of strategies might produce some relevant information.

Job-position power or the lack of it is another theme that could be explored.

Gender issues and cultural and religious differences are other areas for further research.

Future research is needed in order to add to the existing knowledge base on conflict management and its strategies. The implications that these findings as well as future findings could be used to educate and better our understanding of conflict as a human condition is a valuable one.

Implications for Practice

The implications for practice are quite evident. The need to educate not only principals but also secretaries in conflict-management strategies and techniques would expand their repertoires in increasingly difficult roles within the school system. Exposure to the knowledge that certain conflict strategies are available and that certain management techniques may defuse a situation or place the conflict on a win-win continuum is essential to educating those who are the public-relations officers (the principals and secretaries) of our schools.

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APPENDIX

Interview Schedule

Ethical considerations: The respondents will be reminded that

- they may stop the interview at any time
- they may stop to elaborate or clarify a point
- their participation is confidential.

1. Please tell me your school conflict story.
2. How did you handle the conflict at the time that it occurred?
3. Did you use more than one way to manage the conflict?
4. Were there previous signs or history that signalled that perhaps something was wrong?
5. What did you learn from this situation?
6. The outcomes from this situation can be positive, negative, or a combination for each party involved. Can you tell me some of the positive outcomes for the parties involved? Can you tell me some of the negative outcomes for the parties involved?
7. If this situation were to happen again, would you treat it similarly? Can you explain?
8. Could the conflict situation have been avoided?
9. Does the conflict seem resolved or open ended in its summation? Please elaborate.
10. Would you like to say anything else about what we have just discussed?
11. Would it be possible to contact you for clarification if the need arises?
    Thank you for your time.